

# Timeline of Vestal's Gap Road and The Lanesville Historic District

**Claude Moore Park  
21544 Old Vestals Gap Road  
Sterling, Virginia 20164  
Visitor Center 703-444-1275**

**Pre-historic Times** – American Indians followed the route now known as Vestal's Gap Road through the park for hunting activities and other travel. There is a good possibility that they camped next to the "road". Two perennial springs in close proximity to the road provided reliable water sources, plentiful quartz and quartzite were available for tool-making, the hill served as a promontory for hunting and game was abundant (deer, bear, turkey, numerous small mammals, and elk).

**1692** The Rangers of the Potomac under David Strahan used Vestal's Gap Road to visit the Sugarlands to monitor Indian Activity.

**1699** Emissaries of the colonial Governor traveled out Vestal's Gap Road to meet with the Indians at Conoy Island (near Point of Rocks, MD).

**1722** The Treaty of Albany, preventing the Indians from hunting east of the Blue Ridge and south of the Potomac River, opened Virginia's "Northern Neck" to settlement.

**1722** Henning's Statutes mention "The Road to Vestal's Gap".

**1729** Lord Fairfax land grants for the property now in the park were made to Frances and Elizabeth Barnes, known as the "Sisters Tract", (Lanesville Creek east including the house) and Robert Carter Jr. (west of the creek including the Visitor Center).

**1750s** Alexandria and Winchester were among the five largest cities in Virginia. Vestal's Gap Road was the primary route connecting these cities.

**1753** 21-year-old Major George Washington traveled Vestal's Gap Road to deliver a letter from the Governor of the Colony of Virginia to the French military forts in southwestern Pennsylvania.

**1754** Lt. Col. Washington traveled Vestal's Gap Road with 120 militia men heading towards Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh) to confront the French. He was defeated at Fort Necessity. This action began the French and Indian War.

**1755** A portion of General Braddock's troops (approximately 1200 soldiers), including the 44th Regiment under the command of Sir Peter Halkett, the Virginia Regiment, and the North Carolina Regiment commanded by Capt. Edward Brice Dobbs traveled Vestal's Gap Road on their way to Fort Duquesne. George Washington (23 years old) and Daniel Boone (20 years old) followed those troops. Gen. Braddock was killed in this action (he had traveled through Maryland and did not use this route).

**1770s** A single room house, two stories tall with a loft, referred to as a half-house (the section that is now the left half of the front of the house) and separate kitchen building were built. The house was built on posts without a stone foundation. Note on the exterior the matching stone patterns of these two chimneys

(east side parlor and kitchen). The front door was likely located where the left front window is now.

**1779** A survey map of the area named the hill “Little Stoney Mountain” and noted that water draining from this hill entered both Sugarland Run (north east corner of the hill) and Broad Run (remainder of the property) watersheds. The 300+ year old Southern Red Oak, namesake of the Old Oak Trail (orange-blazed) is likely a tree noted in this survey.

**1779** The “Sister’s Tract” (Frances and Elizabeth Barnes) conveyed to William Lane.

**1781** Ann Carr (Nancy) Lane (1781-1844) was born in Lanesville House to William (1750-1813) and Sarah Lane

**1780s or 1790s** The basement was dug out under house, the stone foundation constructed, and the matching parlor with rooms above added (right side of the front of the house). Note on the exterior that this chimney, west side, does not copy the stone pattern of the earlier two chimneys.

**1800** Hardage Lane (1746-1803) bought a portion of the property from his brother William. Hardage was married to Rachel and owned property in Loudoun County, Virginia and Montgomery County, Maryland.

**1803** Hardage Lane died. His daughter Ketura (1785-1849) lived on in the house.

**1803** Ketura Lane married John Keene (1764-1814). They had one son, Newton (1805-1880).

**By 1807** John and Ketura had opened an Ordinary (overnight tavern) and the Lanesville Post Office in the Lanesville House. As such the house would have been a social gathering spot for travelers and local families. The Ordinary operated into the 1820s. It closed sometime after Leesburg Pike (Route 7) opened. Travel was now by horse and buggy rather than by ox cart, people were able to travel farther distances between rest stops, which resulted in less business for ordinaries.

**1814** John Keene died.

**1814** The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and other important documents were brought to Leesburg via Vestal’s Gap Road for safe keeping when Washington, D.C. was burned by the British troops (War of 1812).

**1817** Ketura married Benjamin Bridges (1796- ). He took over running the Ordinary and Post Office. They had three sons, Hardage (1818-1864), Benjamin II (1820-1900), and William (who died in infancy).

**1825** Leesburg Turnpike opened all the way to Leesburg (bridges over Broad Run and Goose Creek finally completed). Most through traffic was no longer using Vestal’s Gap Road.

**1825** General Marquis de Lafayette and President John Quincy Adams attempted to return to Washington by way of Vestal’s Gap Road after visiting former President Monroe at Oak Hill and ceremonies in Leesburg. They were not able to cross Sugarland Run, returned to Belmont and took the turnpike. They passed through the park land twice during that trip.

**1847** Hardage Bridges, Ketura and Benjamin’s oldest son, acquired a portion of the Robert Carter Jr. tract. This is the portion of the Park where the Visitor Center is now located (the entire Park land was then owned by one owner).

**1849** Ketura Lane Keene Bridges died August 11.

**1853** Benjamin Bridges II married Lucy Alice Elgin (1835-1904). They lived in the Lanesville House and had five children, only three survived to adulthood; Richard Dorsey (1854-1934), Molly (1855, died in infancy), Frank (1857, died in infancy), Benjamin III (1859-1924) and Irene (1865-1952).

**1861-1865** Civil War years - Hardage served as a courier for J.E.B. Stuart. Hardage died in Winchester August 30, 1864. Benjamin did not serve in the Confederate Army, due to nearsightedness, but did spend a year in Capitol Prison. The women and children remained here in the Bridges' home.

**1861** Winter quarters for soldiers, known as "shebangs", were built on "Bridges Hill". A Signal Station, used repeatedly by both Union and Confederate troops throughout the Civil War, was constructed at the top of the hill.

**1863 June 18-24** - General John Reynolds (Union) stayed in the Lanesville House while his signal corps camped on the hill. Gen. Reynolds' troops moved from here to Gettysburg. Gen. Reynolds was killed on the first day of fighting at Gettysburg.

**1870s** Building activity at the Bridges home site included joining the front parlor section of the house to the kitchen, remodeling the parlors and possibly adding the front porch and double front doors. The schoolhouse, tenant house and large sections of both barns were built at this time as well (one small section of the south barn pre-dates this era).

**1870-1875** Benjamin Bridges II, an 1848 graduate of Dartmouth College, operated a schoolhouse on this property.

**1880s** Kitchen area of the house was made two stories.

**1900** Benjamin Bridges II died.

**Early 1900s** The kitchen was bumped out in the back area and the back porches were added.

**1905** Irene Bridges, unmarried daughter of Benjamin Bridges II (granddaughter of Ketura Lane Keene Bridges and Benjamin Bridges) acquired the property after her mother's death (Lucy, 1904).

**1918** An article about the Old Bridges' Home appeared in The Washington Star newspaper.

**1941** Dr. Claude Moore (1892-1991) purchased the property at auction from Irene Bridges (the house had been owned by the same family, Lane/Keene/Bridges, for approximately 170 years).

**1950s** Dr. Moore built the upper pond we now refer to as Frogshackle Pond (pond is visible on the 1964 aerial photo).

**1975** Dr. Moore donated the property to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) with life estate.

**1970s** Dr. Moore moved Frogshackle cabin to the site from Ryan (Ashburn). He rebuilt it by himself when he was 86 years old (so the story goes). Dr. Moore named the cabin Frogshackle, we are not certain of the story behind the name. A frog is an arrangement of intersecting railroad tracks that allows wheels to cross the junction. A shackle is a coupling device. The railroad did run near the cabin's original location. Perhaps the name came from the railroad.

**Late 1970s** NWF built the Caretaker's House for Naturalist, Craig Tufts.

**Late 1970s or early 1980s** NWF built the lower pond we now refer to as the Wildlife Pond.

**1986** the National Wildlife Federation sold the property to Miller and Smith (developers). Dr. Moore initiated lawsuits that went up to the Virginia Supreme Court. Dr. Moore lost these suits. County citizens passed a bond referendum (1987) to purchase the site during this process.

**1990** Loudoun County purchased the site from Miller and Smith and opened Claude Moore Park.

**1991 July 11** Dr. Moore died at age 98.

**2000 February 3** Vestal's Gap Road and Lanesville Historic District (including the house and outbuildings) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, United States Department of Interior.

Prepared by Meredyth D. Breed, Assistant Park Manager, with thanks to the volunteers who have conducted extensive research over the years; Carl and Helen MacIntyre, Rebecca Fitzgerald, Steve Meserve, Karen Kolosvary, Dr. David Clark and Roger and Rachel Heppes; and to the Lane, Keene and Bridges families for sharing their family histories. Sincere thanks to the Lanesville Heritage Preservation Society, Friends of Claude Moore Park, for their ongoing efforts to preserve the natural and historic areas of Claude Moore Park.

December 27, 2002

Revised 3-18-04 AVU

Revised 9-01-05 MDB